

Prevalence And Genderisation Of Single-Parent Families As A Correlate Of Students' Academic Performance In Selected Secondary Schools In Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: The study sought to find out the correlation between Prevalence and Genderisation of single parent families and academic Performance in Selected Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. A correlational research designs both qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted in assessing variable relationships. The target population comprised 1175 respondents including students and other stakeholders derived from five public day secondary schools. The research adopted questionnaires, in depth interview schedules, Focus Group, and documentary analysis of the academic records in data collection. Data was quantitatively and qualitatively analysed, results were then presented in tables, graph. SPSS version 26.0 was used in quantitative data analysis, providing both descriptive and correlational information. Chi-square analysis of variable relationships was conducted using a standard alpha of 0.05 at a 95% confidence interval. NVIVO software was used during analysis of qualitative data to identify patterns and common themes of variable relationships. Piloting of the study was done in Nakuru west secondary school to validate the content and face validity of the instruments. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that; first, single parenthood has a negative impact on the academic performance of the students. Second, students from single parent families experience more challenges, notably, material and financial that are attributable to their poor academic outcomes. The study findings may be beneficial in amending learning interventions and tailoring academic support to improve academic performance for students with single-parent backgrounds in the Competency Based Curriculum era.

Keywords: Single Parenting, Dual Parenting, Prevalence, Genderisation

I. INTRODUCTION

Parental contribution to a child's holistic development frequently receives less consideration with its influence understated. The outcome of parental absence in a child's life creates a psychosocial gap evident from poor developmental outcomes across life stages and behaviours associated with lacking parental support and guidance (Hardy, 2018; Joshi & Goehring, 2020). This concept highlights the plight of children from single-parent families, with a bulk of

commitment burdening double role play for successful development (Griffin, 2021).

Globally, social structure modification and evolution of family meaning have seen a rise in single-parent. For instance, Afifi and Denes (2012) reported an estimated 13.7 million single parents, raising over half (12 million) of 20 million children living in the United States of America by the year 2000. Authors noted a sharp increase in children under single parent custody over the period, with approximately 21.8 million as of 2009. According to the US census 2016, 37.8 million children are raised by single parents. Similarly,

according to the Canada census 2016, around 19.2 % of all Canadian children live with single parents. Single parenting has been attributed to lower academic achievement. Results of a research performed to establish the association between education and family organization in America reported higher academic scores and success rates among students raised by both parents than students with single-parent background (Oppawsky, 2021; Garriga & Martínez-Lucena, 2018).

Developed countries like Western Europe, Great Britain have introduced measures to assist children from single-parent households (Engler & Weisstanner, 2020). In Sweden, children from single parents are entitled to free medical care, basic school, and an allowance of 1,050 SEK / month. The United Kingdom (UK) has average household claims between single and two-parent households, with more support claims for single parenting.

In West Africa, Anyakoha (2016) noted that family type impacts student's academic performance in secondary schools from Nigeria. A comparison of academic performance showed better outcomes among students from dual family units than those with single-parent backgrounds. This was also reported by a UNICEF study on academic performance among South African and Ghanaian students, which established a predicting effect of family background, family income, and parent's education level on students' academic attainment (UNICEF, 2013). In addition, a study conducted in basic schools in WA Municipality, Ghana by Azumah *et al.* (2018) on single parenting and student academic performance showed there was a variance between students raised by both parents and those raised by single parents in moulding a child's overall background, support system and shaping success potential.

In Tanzania, a research conducted by Kapinga (2014) on the performance in academics of students from secondary school noted negative outcome of one parent rearing students. The finding highlights the need to deeply explore the role of school administration and counsellors on the holistic development of children from a single parent in school. It revealed complex interrelationships between socio-economic factors and the educational experiences of children with single-parent backgrounds (Kapinga, 2014).

In Kenya, globalization's influence on social units has seen the incidence of single-parent families' increase with modernization, contributing to the breakdown in traditional family structure (Kaplan, 2015). The Kenya demographic health survey (KDHS) (2014) report indicates that 13% of girls aged 15-19 years in Taita Taveta County are teenage mothers. The comparison of children based on parenthood showed that students raised by single parents had a higher school dropout rate, with few in school at age 17 in the county (KDHS, 2014). With the World Vision (2013) study showing a 12% single parenting proportion in the county and a potential of increase over the years, the effect on student performance remains an education concern.

The number of students with single parents is on the rise in Nakuru County. According to KDHS (2017), 45.8% of all students in the county are from single-parent households. A study conducted by Murage (2016) in Nakuru Municipality on impact of family organization on performance of public secondary day schools and student educational achievement found a significant influence of parenthood background on

students' educational achievement and schools' academic performance.

Prior studies show limited research on single parenting's implications on Kenyan students' academic achievement. Ngware *et al.* (2019) observed that financial challenges in single relationships increase the socio-economic burden in the families, intensifying parental struggles in child provision and developmental support. Thus, there was need to explore single parenting influence on academic performance of children from these backgrounds. The current study sought to advance knowledge on the predicting effect of single parenting on secondary school students' academic performance in Nakuru East, Nakuru County, Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In a longitudinal study of family structure effect on student academic achievement, Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) noted poor education achievement among children from single parenting background, with high dropout rate (12.7%) among boys than girls. There has been change in society values regarding marriage as well as family setting since the rate of marriage breakups and instabilities are on the rise. Past studies have indicated that single parenthood has implications on a child's wellbeing, how they develop, and academic achievement in terms of performance. As a result of the social, physical, and emotional challenges experienced. The academic performance of children raised by single parents is affected since those from this family set up face challenges that are constantly evolving.

In Nakuru County, Kinga *et al.* (2014) reported an increased incidence of single parenting with far-reaching effects on children's educational outcomes. Therefore, there was need to examine implications of single parenthood on academic performance of children from public day secondary schools. This research sought to explore the implications of one parentage on learners from a sample of secondary schools in Nakuru East sub-county, Nakuru, Kenya.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The following objectives guided the study;
- ✓ Identify the prevalence of single-parent families among students from a sample of public secondary schools in Nakuru East, Nakuru County.
 - ✓ Determine and genderisation of single-parent families among students from a sample of public secondary schools in Nakuru East, Nakuru County.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- The following were the research questions that guided the study;
- ✓ What is the prevalence and genderisation of single parents' families among public secondary schools students in Nakuru East, Nakuru County?
 - ✓ Is there a significant relationship between prevalence and genderisation of single parent families and academic performance in selected secondary schools in Nakuru East, Nakuru County?

II. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a correlational research design. A correlational design is a non-experimental form of research design that enables the researcher to measure two variables in order to access and get an understanding of their statistical relationship without any influence from extraneous variables. This is according to Creswell (2014) A correlational investigation plan was suitable for this study due to its applicability in measuring the strength of relationships between the variables and their statistical relationship (McLeod, 2017). The study thus involved administering questionnaires to the various sets of respondents and collecting their responses.

B. TARGET POPULATION

Population refers to a sample of individuals, items, or the objects selected for the study, while the target population refers to the actual number of studied individuals, items, or objects (Orodho, 2005). The study's target population comprised all public secondary school students within the study area, teachers, support staff, chief, education stakeholders However, only five public secondary schools was selected as the study population with form three students targeted as the sampling frame. Students from single-parent backgrounds were purposely sampled for the study.

C. SAMPLE SIZE

Based on Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) 10 - 50% sample size range appropriateness on adequate population representation, the current study sampled 30% of the parents, teachers, students, among other main stakeholders in the education sector. The selected schools had approximately (110-150) students in form three classes, with a gender distribution of about 50% - 60% (Boys 120 and girls 105). Teachers are approximately around 30 respectively per school. The selected sample ranged from 3 - 5 teachers per school. The study also included the area chief.

Categories	Target population	Sample size	Percentage of sample size
Boys	400	120	30 %
Girls	350	105	30 %
Parents	260	80	30 %
Teachers	150	45	30 %
Guidance &counselling	15	5	30%
Community (Chief)	5	2	30%
Total	1175	357	180%

($N \geq 30\%$)

Table 3.1: Study Sample Size

D. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

This study adopted purposive sampling of students from single-parent backgrounds in selecting the student study

respondents. Murphy (2020) notes the contribution of purposive sampling in accessing a population subset with characteristics of interest and guiding participants' selection. This approach ensures suitable representation of the population of interest, enhancing information validity and generalization to groups with similar characteristics (Kothari, 2013). Purposive sampling of teacher counsellors, support staff, community representatives, and other key informants will also be conducted to provide deeper insight into the study variables. Roswell (2011) avers that the significance of purposive sampling involves targeted participant identification with profiles of interest to provide additional information on the research topic. Also, systematic sampling was applied in selecting students from schools with more children from single-parent backgrounds than the calculated school sample size

E. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Excel software was used in data entry with coding and quantitative analysis performed using SPSS version 26.the questionnaire was used to obtain demographic information on the prevalence and genderisation of single parents so as to identify the population of single parents families hence meeting objective .Descriptive findings were presented as frequencies and percentage tables to provide summary behaviours of the data. The association between single parenting and academic performance was established via a chi square test. This prevented assumption about the respondents opinions NVIVO software was used to extract common themes and patterns in behaviour this aided the study to identify the attitudes and perceptions towards single parent families and how it affects academic performance.

III. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

RESPONSE RATE

RESPONSE RATE

The eligibility of the questioners administered to students and teachers were investigated and the findings presented in table 4.1

Respondents	Questionnaires administered	Eligible Questionnaires
Students	225	220
Teachers	45	44
Total	270 (100%)	264 (97.78%)

Note. $N = 270 =$ Total number of respondents

Table 4.1: Return Rate of Research Instruments

From table 4.1 the results showed that a total of 270 questionnaires were administered to students and teachers with an initial percentage of 100, the researcher obtained 264 eligible questionnaires, thus obtaining a response rate of 97.78% (264). This implies that the response rate obtained through the study's instruments was sufficient for generalization of results to the target population. The findings were in agreement with Fincham (2008) report which

indicated that researchers should aim at obtaining a rate of 80 percent or higher.

Gender And Age

A cross tabulation was performed to compare the respondents' gender and age of students was analyzed and the results presented in Table 4.2 to 4.4,

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	120	53.3
Female	105	46.7
Total	225	100

Table 4.2: Gender of the students

The results in table 4.2 indicated that out of 225 students used in this study, 53.3% (120) were males and 46.7% (105) were females. This was similar to findings reported by Murage (2016) that found out that out of 77 students, 39 were boys while 38 were girls. This may be attributed to the fact that girls may drop out from school due to factors such as teenage pregnancy, early marriages According to UNICEF (2016), learners enrollment in secondary schools globally is 51.6% for males and 48.4% for females the age of the respondents was also analyzed and the findings illustrated in table 4.3.

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
13-15	58	25.8
16-18	159	70.7
Over 18	8	3.5
Total	225	100

Table 4.3: Age of the students

From table 4.3, the findings showed that 70.7% (159) of students were aged between 16 to 18 years, 25.8% (58) between 13-15 years, while those aged over 18 years were 3.5% (8). The low percentage at over 18 years could be as a result of the official age of joining secondary school in Kenya being between 14-17 years this is according to KICD (2017) that made the official age to be from 14years-17years. The findings were in agreement with the study done by Magara (2017), in Taita Taveta County, that found out that (16years-18years) was at 67% (47) was the highest age in enrollment.

TEACHERS TEACHING EXPERIENCES

Teaching experience among teachers in Kenyan secondary schools vary, this study considered the frequency of teaching experiences of teachers in selected schools in Nakuru East Sub county, Nakuru County and the findings presented in table 4.4

Teaching Experience (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	5	11.1
6-10	12	26.6
11-15	8	17.7
16-20	14	31.1
21+	6	5.9
Total	45	100

N=45

Table 4.4: Teachers teaching experiences

The results in table 4.4 showed that most of the school teachers 31.1% (14) had worked for 6 to 10 years, followed by 16 to 20 years with a percentage of 26.6% (12), 17.7% (8)

with 11 to 15 years while 11.1% (5) of teachers had worked for 1 to 5 years, with 5.9% (6) having worked for a period of more than 21 years. The lower percentage of teachers with teaching experience of 21+ could be as a result of majority of teachers leaving the teaching profession due to natural attrition, early retirement of getting employed to other institutions this is according to Teachers Service commission report in 2014. Similar observation was made by Magara (2017).

SCHOOL CATEGORY

The study also explored the schools according to category. The findings are presented in Table 4.3.

School category	Frequency	Percentage
Mixed day and boarding	156	69.3
Mixed day	69	30.6
Total	225	100.0

Note: N=225

Table 4.5: School Category

Table 4.3 indicates that 69.3% (156) of the participants attended mixed day schools while 30.6% (69) attended mixed day and boarding schools. This could be as a result of provision of Free day secondary school education in Kenya by the Government of Kenya in 2008. There is financial constraints among single parenthood families and this could limit them from taking their children to boarding schools many single parents are usually low economic earners based on the study undertaken by Carteny and Taylor (2006); Magara (2017).

PREVALENCE OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

The study sought to determine the population of single parent family, the population of single mothers as compared to single fathers and how it affects academic performance.

TYPE OF FAMILY

The research also pursued the type of family the students came from. This information was obtained from the data given by the class teachers' admission records

The findings are presented in figure 4.1.

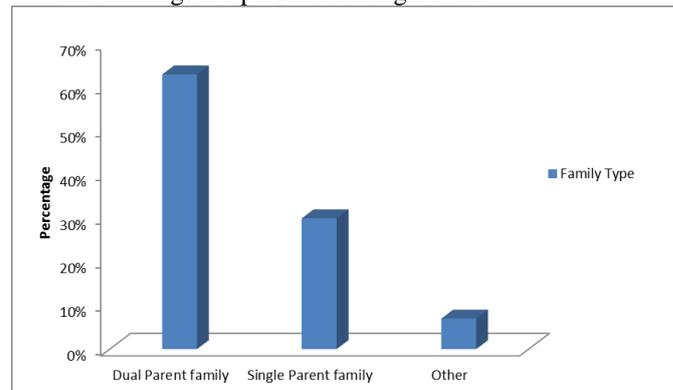


Figure 4.1: Type of family

The results in figure 4.1, demonstrated that most of the students 63% (166) came from two parent families while 30%

(80) came from single parent families. A further 7% (18) of the students came from other families. The findings were in agreement with the study reported by Magara (2017), that found out 55% of students were from dual family, 27% single parent family and 18% other family set up.

GENDERISATION OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

The study sought to find out which of the two parents; male or female was taking care of the student. The findings are presented in Table 4.4

Gender of parents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	78	34.6
Female	147	65.4
Total	225	100.0

Note: N=225.

Table 4.6: Gender of parents

The findings in Table 4.4 show that most of the students 65.4% (147), from single parent families were being taken care of by female parents while 34.6% (78) were under the care of male parents. The high percentage of female single parenting observed in this study could be due to the initial Government of Kenya law that gives female custody to children under the age of 18 years. Similar observation has been reported by Murage (2016) that found out that out of 39% single parent families, women headed 30% while 9% were headed by men

DURATION OF A SINGLE PARENTHOOD

The Duration of a single parenthood is important in this study, the researcher scrutinized the number of years the student has been raised by a single parent and the result presented in table 4.5.

Length in years	Frequency	Percentage
0-2	48	21.3
3-5	82	36.4
6-8	54	24
8 and above	41	18.2
Total	225	100.0

Note: N=225.

Table 4.7: Duration of a single parenthood

The results in Table 4.5 reveal that most of the students who participated 36.4% (82) had been raised by single parent for a period between 3-5 years. Those raised by a single parent for duration more than 8 years were 24% (54). A further 21.3% (48) had been raised by single parent for duration of less than 2 years while 18.2% (41) had been raised by single parent for a period of 6-8 years. The finding reveals that there is a rise in number of single parenting families from 0-5 years. However, the results showed that the number of single parenthood decreased from 6 and above years. This could probably be due to the young females getting married at later years, the probability of Kenyan women ending up as single mothers by the age of 45 is high at around 60% (Clark & Hamplova, 2013). Similar observation has also been reported by Minayo (2020) the study also examined the relationship of single parenting and students' academic performance and the findings discussed in the following section.

SINGLE PARENTHOOD AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The study sought to find out whether there is an association between single parenthood and academic performance of students. The findings are presented in Table 4.6

		Single parenthood	Academic Performance
Single parenthood	Pearson Correlation	1	-.411**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.411**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00
		225	225

Note: N=225.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.8: Correlation Matrix for Single Parenthood verses Academic Performance

The results from Table 4.6, showed that there is a significant negative correlation between single parenthood and academic performance ($r(223) = -.411, P < 0.05$). Having established that there is an association between single parenthood and academic performance, the study analyzed the relationship of teachers to the academic performance of students from single parents. The findings are presented in figure 4.2.

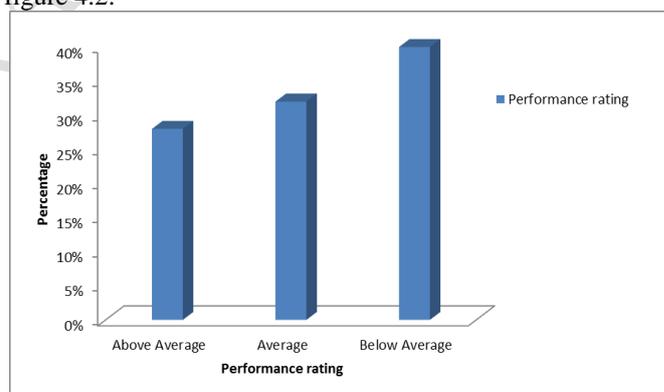


Figure 4.2: Performance rating of students from single parent families

From figure 4.2, it was established that the performance rating of students from single parents who are above average, average and below average were 28% (14), 32% (16) and 40% (20) respectively. The higher percentage of students from single parents who are below average was attributed to some of the challenges these learners went through at home and even in school. Similar observation has also been reported by Murage (2016) that found out that 53% of single parent students were below average in academic performance compared with 47% who were above average.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATING

With regard to school attendance of students from single parent families rating was done on three categories; excellent,

bad, and worst. The frequencies were established and shown in Table 4.7.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	42	19.2
Bad	138	61.3
Worse	44	19.5
Total	224	100.0

Note: N=225.

Table 4.9: School Attendance Rating

The findings as demonstrated in Table 4.6 reveal that school attendance of most of the students 61.3% (138) from single parent families were categorized as bad (missing school for more than 14 days a term) while attendance of a further 19.5% (44) was categorized as worse (missing school for more than 21 days a term). A 19.2 (42) percent of students were categorized as excellent (missing school for less than 7 days a term).

The high number of students from single parenting missing school could be due to the fact that many of female parents lack authority to their children when they reach adolescence Majority of the single parents could also lack school fees or the single parent being away from home similar observation was made by a study conducted by Okaka (2016) that found most students from single parent homes 50% (35) were absent for between 17-21days in a term while 17% (12) were absent for 11-16 days, the least were 7% (5) having been absent for 0-6days.

STUDENT'S SOCIALIZATION

It is of interest to study the social wellbeing of students from single parenthood. The results are in Table 4.8

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Often	26	11.5
Not often	133	59.1
Never	66	29.4
Total	225	100.0

Table 4.10 Socialization of students from single parent families

The results in Table 4.8 showed that majority of students from single parent families (59.1%) (133) do not often socialize with peers with 29.4 percent (66) totally not socializing.11.5% (26) were found to often socialize with peers. This is because most of the students felt stigmatized by their peers hence isolating themselves, unlike homes characterized by two parents, children from single parent families often exhibit limited socialization skills (Griffin, 2021). The findings were in agreement with the observation made by Okaka (2016) that found out that majority of the teachers responses on single parents students socialization was 57% (40) those not able to socialize well, while 29% (20) socialized well.

FAMILY TYPE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The study sought to compare the students from dual parent family and those from single parent families' academic

performance to carry out this analysis; t-test for independent samples was run. The results are shown in Table 4.9.

Academic performance	Type of family	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Dual family	56	45.4795	11.59893	0.78378
Single	50	38.6633	11.96529	0.85466	

Table 4.11: Mean of Academic Performance

From table 4.9, the results show that students from dual families had a higher academic mean of 45.4795 when compared to students from single parent families whose mean was 38.6633 with a std error mean of 0.78378 and 0.85466 respectively. This indicated that students from dual families performed better than students from single parent families on academics. The results obtained were similar to those reported by Jessy, 2020; Kagendo, 2017 and Murage, 2016 who stated that students from dual families performed better than students from single parenthood. This study also investigated the qualitative analysis of prevalence and genderisation of single parent families and the findings were discussed in the following section.

In regard with the first objective that sought to identify the prevalence and genderisation of single-parent families among students from a sample of public secondary schools in Nakuru East, Nakuru County, the responses were qualitatively analyzed the researcher established that many interviewees (84%) reported that most of the students coming single parent families come from families where the parent is the mother. One of the interviewees observed that mother single parenting is almost becoming common phenomenon in Nakuru East. When the researcher asked about the prevalence, he noted that;

Nowadays almost four in ten families comes from single parent families. A spot-check indicates that most of these families are run by single mothers. (SCHOLCOUNS-001, Male, Flamingo sub location, November 2021)

These shows that single parent families are actually present in our society and it increases each day, this is similarly shown globally where a study was carried out, Across Europe, the numbers of women taking care of their children alone are high (Sophie, 2016). Many of these families end up in the single parent format following divorce or separations where mothers get the opportunity to care for the children. Steinbach (2016) claims that while men are also serving as single parents, the number of women under the same format almost double those of their male counterparts. From this it is clear that this family set up is gaining popularity in the society, therefore, the government should come up with measures to help curb high rising rate.

Consequently, an interview with the participants indicated that a considerable proportion of learners in Nakuru East, Nakuru County, come from single parent families, another informant observed that there are more single mothers as compared to single fathers, she stated that;

Sometimes when teachers refer indiscipline cases to our office, we tend to dig more before we also refer the cases to the police to find the root causes of this learner's conduct, most of them who come from single parent background, are from single mothers, I think there are more single mothers as compared to men. (LD03 CHIEF, Female, Flamingo sub location, November 2021)

This showed that there are more female single parents as compared to males. Therefore there is need to enlighten females on dangers of getting children out of wedlock. Similar study was reported by Canadian sociologist, who stated that the probability of Kenyan women ending up as single mothers by the age of 45 is high at around 60% (Clark & Hamplova, 2013). Similarly, this study investigated the relationship between challenges experienced by learners from single-parent families set up and academic performance.

IV. CONCLUSION

Parental contribution in child development exceeds the primary role of nursing care and support for life skill development. It includes more participatory influence in other spheres of life such as, talent development and school performance. The parenting process has been evolving with single parenting becoming an increasingly acceptable phenomenon in contemporary society. A higher proportion of households are, in present times, headed by a single parent and most of the single parents are women. Based on the research outcome, it can be concluded that; first, single parenthood has a negative impact on the academic performance of the students.

The study also determined whether students from single parent families were social with other students. The findings from the study indicated that majority students from single parent families set up were often not socializing with peers. In conclusion, the study established that coming from a single parent family had a negative impact on the academic performance of the student.

Based on the findings study concludes that children from single parent families were found to perform poorly academically in comparison with students from dual parent families.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations;

- ✓ The government should empower girls, through education, employment, and even enlightening them more on contraceptives so as to reduce the number of children born out of wedlock since the findings revealed that there are more single mothers,
- ✓ The government should identify learners from single-parent families so that they can be offered the necessary psychological and emotional support through guidance and counseling, financial aid.
- ✓ Class teachers should identify the students from single parent families who often miss school, not active in class participation, and motivate them to participate by offering those rewards and identify the learners' strengths and build on them so as to enhance their self-esteem. They can introduce father/mother figure from the teachers, mentors and even role models from the similar family set up who have succeeded well in their academic performance to motivate them.

- ✓ The community social welfare should adopt an integrated counseling approach programs such as family counseling, home visits and supportive associations designed to help children from single parents and their parents so as to improve the children's academic performance at school.

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